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Mr. *McGregere's*
S E R M O N
ON THE
Trial of the SPIRITS.





THE

Spirits of the present Day Tried.

A

S E R M O N

At the Tuesday Evening-Lecture in
Brattle-street, BOSTON, Nov. 3. 1741.

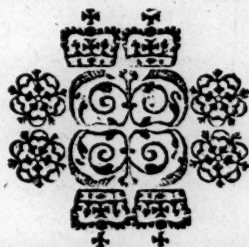
By the Reverend

Mr. *David McGregere,* k

Of Londonderry in New-England.

With a PREFACE by some Ministers of *Boston.*

I. Theff. v. 21. *Prove all Things : hold
fast that which is Good.*



BOSTON, Printed by D. FOWLE for D. HENCHMAN
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CORRECTIONS.

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The P R E F A C E.

AS all the Protestant Churches in *Europe*, both *Episcopalian* & *Presbyterian* most happily agreed at the Time of the Reformation in the Scripture *Doctrines of Grace*, as appears by the Harmony of their Confessions published; in particular, the Church of *Scotland* in 1560, the Church of *England* in 1562, 3, & the Church of *Ireland* in 1616; so it must be own'd that the *Presbyterians* have generally persevered in a steady Adherence to the Original *Doctrines* of the Reformation, to the present Day.

And as the *Assembly's shorter Catechism* has been all along agreeable to the known Principles of the *New-England* Churches, & has been generally received & taught in them as a System of Christian Doctrine agreeable to the HOLY SCRIPTURES, wherein they happily unite; It is a great Pleasure to us that our *Presbyterian* Brethren who come from *Ireland* are generally with us in *these important Points*, as also in the particular *Doctrines of experimental Piety* arising from them, & the wondrous *Work of God* agreeable to them at this Day making its triumphant Progress thro' the Land: all now happily combining to illustrate & confirm each other in so glaring & strong a Manner as is irresistible to serious & unprejudic'd Beholders; and has already forced many Men of *clear Minds, strong Powers, considerable Knowledge*, & firmly riveted in the *Arminian* and *Socinian* Tenets, to give them all up at once & yield to the adorable *Sovereignty & Irresistibility* of the DIVINE SPIRIT in his saving Operations on the Souls of Men.

For to see on the one Hand such Men as these, *some of them of licentious Lives*, long inured in a Course of Vices, and of high Spirits, coming to the Preaching of the Word, some only out of Curiosity, others with a strong Antipathy and meer Design to get Matter of Cavilling and Banter; all at once in Opposition to their inward Enmity, Resolutions, and Resistances, to fall under an unexpected & hated Power; to have all the Strength of their Resolution & Resistance taken away; to have such an inward View of the horrid Wickedness

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Wickedness not only of their Lives, but also of their Hearts, with their exceeding great & immediate Danger of eternal Misery, as has amaz'd their Souls & thrown them into Distresses unutterable, yea forc'd them to cry out in the Assemblies with the greatest Agonies : and then in two or three Days & sometimes sooner, to have such unexpected & raised Views of the infinite Grace & Love of GOD in CHRIST, as have enabled them to believe in Him, lifted them at once out of their Distresses, filled their Hearts with Admiration and Joy unspeakable & full of Glory, breaking forth in their shining Countenance & transporting Voices to the Surprize of those about them : And to see them kindling up at once into a Flame of Love & Praise to GOD, an utter Detestation of their former Courses & vicious Habits, yea by such a Detestation the very Power of those Habits at once receive a mortal Wound : In short to see their high Spirits on a sudden humbled, their hard Hearts made tender, their Aversion from the Holy GOD now turn'd into a powerful and prevailing Bent to contemplate upon Him as reveal'd in CHRIST, to labour to be like Him in Holiness, to please and honour Him by a universal & glad Conformity to his Will & Nature, & to promote his holy Kingdom in all about them ; loving them, forgiving them, asking Forgiveness of them, abounding in Acts of Justice, Charity, in a meek & condescending Carriage towards the meanest, and aspiring after higher Sanctity----

And to see other Gentlemen of the like *Knowledge, Parts & Principles*, & of *sober, just & religious Lives*, as far as their meer Reason with outward Revelation are able to carry them, & prepossess'd against this Work as imagined *Enthusiasm* ; yet at once surprizingly to find themselves intirely destitute of that inward Sanctity & supream Love to GOD & Holiness which the Gospel teaches as absolutely needful to see the Kingdom of Grace & Glory ; to find themselves no more than conceited Pharisees, who had been working out a Righteousness of their own for Justification ; and to have a clear Discovery of their inward Enmity to CHRIST & the Nature & Way of Redemption by Him, with the native Vileness of their Hearts & Lives they had
never

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never seen before: In short to find themselves yet unrenewed in the Spirit of their Minds, & under the heavy Wrath and Curse of GOD; to open into the clear Discovery of their past Delusions; to find the Hardness of their Hearts, the Blindness of their Minds, their utter Impotence to convert themselves or believe in CHRIST; to loose all their former Confidence, give up their beloved Schemes, see themselves undone & helpless, & sink into great Distress: and then condemning themselves as guilty Wretches humbly lying at the Foot of absolute & sovereign Grace, and looking up to CHRIST the only *Mediator* to reconcile them to the glorious GOD, to justify them wholly by his own most perfect *Righteousness*, & to enlighten, quicken, sanctify, dwell in and govern them by his ALMIGHTY SPIRIT; and there to wait till they find a new & mighty Life & Power come into their Souls, enabling them to embrace, trust in & love this divine REDEEMER, rejoice with Satisfaction in Him, & perform every Kind of Duty both to GOD & *Man* with Pleasure & with quite another Frame and Spirit than before---

Such great and sudden Turns as these are as evident Demonstrations as we can possibly conceive of the Truth of the *inspired Scriptures*, & in particular of those Scripture *Doctrines* of the *sovereign & victorious Grace* of CHRIST, receiv'd & taught among us: We see with our Eyes, that when He rideth forth on the Word of Truth conquering & to conquer, his right Hand teaches Terrible Things; He makes his Arrows so sharp & piercing in the Hearts of his stoutest Enemies, as oblige them to fall down under Him; and when the Day of his Power comes on any People, He makes the most obstinate to be most gladly willing and obedient to Him: And these *Principles of Grace*, & these *Works of GOD* do most invincibly confirm each other.

And tho' it must be own'd with Sorrow that some few who see these wonderous Works continue unconvinced; yet this is no more strange than that some of the most learned and religious Men, as were the *Scribes & Pharisees* who saw the wondrous Works of CHRIST on Earth, yet continued un-

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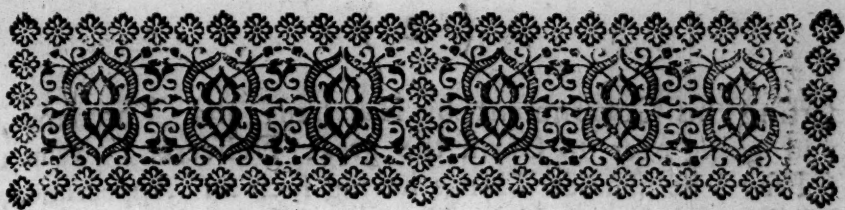
unconvinced that they were the Works of GOD, yea pursu'd Him with unrelenting Enmity and Violence. However, 'tis a reviving Consolation to us, that as this Work surprizingly goes on from Town to Town, it goes on more and more to silence the most fierce Opposers : Though mighty Oppositions rise at first, it bares them down before it ; and our *more mighty* SAVIOUR seems resolv'd to go on still from conquering to conquer.

In vain do its remaining Enemies attempt to brand it with the Name--*Enthusiasm*. For this is like the gentile *Romans* branding the *Jewish Religion* with the hated Name of *Superstition* : and if *this Work* is truly *Enthusiasm*, then we have been wholly mistaken in the Meaning of the *Word* : and what they call *Enthusiasm* is a Glorious and Blessed Work of GOD, most powerfully & suddenly changing the very *Hearts & Lives* of Men ; making them in a great Degree like to CHRIST in Love & Righteousness and Holiness & Meekness & Humility ; filling their Hearts with holy Joy and their Mouths with Praises.

But we must remit the remaining Opposers to the *Law and Testimony* of GOD Himself in the inspired Oracles ; as our Rev. & Dear Brother the Author of the following valuable Sermon does. And we are glad on this Occasion to join our Testimony with him, both to the same *Doctrines of Grace* & to the *wonderous Works of GOD* agreeable to them : as also to declare our great Satisfaction to see him & others of our said *Presbyterian Brethren* concurring with us in them : with our Apprehension that our *uniting in these important Points*, is such a powerful Band of *Union in Christian Love & Fellowship* as should overcome the Remains of every Kind of Prejudice that may yet subsist among our People : and our earnest Wishes that with a tender & meek Forbearance of each other in different Sentiments about Church Order and Government, we may all unite in maintaining & promoting these more excellent and momentous Points of *Grace & vital Piety*.

Boston, Jan. 12.
1741, 2.

THOMAS PRINCE
JOHN WEBB
WILLIAM COOPER.



I. JOHN iv. 1.

*Beloved, believe not every Spirit,
but try the Spirits whether they
be of God: because many false
Prophets are gone out into the
World.*

WE read *Rev.* 12. 12. That the Devil came down among the Inhabitants of the Earth having great Wrath because he knew his Time was short. When the strong Man armed keepeth his Palace, all his Goods are in Peace : every Thing is then as he would have it to be : his Subjects go sleeping on to Hell, and imagine themselves all the while in the direct Way to Heaven. But on the other Hand, when he perceives that his Policies begin to be detected, the Eyes of his Slaves to be opened to see their Misery and their Need of the Remedy, and that by this Means his Kingdom appears to be going to Wreck ; when he sees the Standard of the great Messias erected and the Gathering of the People about it ; when he sees them flock thereto as a Cloud and as the Doves to their Windows ; that Men are daily deserting

serting his Government by Hundreds and Thousands, and going over to Christ the great Deliverer : When (I say) he beholds Things having such an Appearance, he then thinks it is high Time for him to bestir himself, and if possible to support his tottering Empire. To this End he convokes the black Divan, takes Counsel how he may mar God's Work most effectually : and in Pursuance of this Counsel he finds it sometimes necessary to transform himself into an Angel of Light, and to send forth his Ministers ; who though inward they are ravening Wolves, yet they come in Sheeps Cloathing : and partly by hellish Lies, partly by aggravating some real Indiscretions, partly by false Parallels, perverting some Texts of Scripture, and misapplying others ; they put some of the weaker even of God's own Children to a Stand to that Degree that they know not for some Time what to say : So that they would deceive (were it possible) the very Elect.

Thus it is in this glorious Day of Gospel Grace. As the good Spirit appears to be striving in a remarkable Manner ; So Satan and his Instruments, we have Reason to think, are very industrious : Yea so cunningly does this insidious Adversary manage, that he sometimes gets good Men engaged upon his Side. We have great Reason to fear that it is now a Time in various Places in which there is Ground for the repeating of God's Complaint by his Prophet *Hos. 4. 6.* My People are destroyed for lack of Knowledge ; that those who lead them cause them to err : and that by this Means God's Name continually every Day is blasphemed. But blessed be God, that we have our Bibles. So that if it should happen at any Time that those whose Lips ought to preserve Knowledge, should themselves turn aside from the Ways of God either in Doctrine or Morals ; that in this Case we are not obliged to follow them implicitly, but that we have a sure Word of Prophecy even the *Law* and Testimony for our Rule, and also the *Promise* that if we

ask

ask the Holy Spirit we shall receive him. In sum, we have great Reason to be thankful that our God has given us Liberty and put us in a Capacity of judging for our selves. That I may therefore have an Opportunity of showing the Necessity and Importance of using this our Christian Liberty aright in trying the Spirits whether they be of God ; I have chosen to speak from the above Text as the Ground of the following Discourse : where the Apostle says, *Beloved, believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits whether they be of God : &c.*

It may not perhaps be amiss to observe briefly, that the Penman of *this Epistle* was the Evangelist and beloved Disciple *John* : the particular Time when he wrote it is uncertain : the Persons to whom he wrote it are said to be *Jews* : not those that dwelt in *Judea*, but those who lived in the Eastern Part of *Asia*, viz. in the Empire of *Parthia*.--- The Scope of the Apostle in this Epistle is, *partly* to prove, that *JESUS of Nazareth* is the true MESSIAS ; not only to induce Men stedfastly to believe this great Fundamental, but to impress the Truth of it upon their Souls in a more deep, lively and practical Manner ; *partly* to reduce the Licentious, to raise the spiritually Dead, and quicken all to a more strict, lively and vigorous Christianity ; and *partly* to excite Christians to the Duty of mutual Love, which seems to have been this beloved Disciple's favourite Subject.

More particularly *in the Words* we have (1.) A Caution. (2.) A Duty enjoined. (3.) A Motive to the Performance of said Duty. (1.) A Caution in these Words, *Beloved, believe not every Spirit*. The Term *Spirit* is here by a Figure put for the Person who is acted by a Spirit whether good or bad. 'Tis *q. d.* believe not every Person pretending to Inspiration, or to be the Messenger of God : Don't be so credulous and implicit as to suffer your selves to be imposed upon by every one who says he has a Commission from Heaven.--- The (2.) Thing in the Words is a Duty enjoined in these

Words, *Try the Spirits*, q. d. Christ your gracious Master has forbidden you to be the Servants of Men, or to pin your Faith upon any Man's Sleeve : you are therefore to be Followers of no Man farther than he is of Christ : Nay your Master has not only allowed you to judge for your selves, but he has put you in a Capacity so to do : to this end he has made you reasonable Creatures, and given you his Word in your native Language : Imitate the *Bereans* therefore : search the Scriptures daily with all Readiness of Mind, to see if the Things that are spoken be so.--- But then the (3.) Thing in the Words is a *Motive* to the Performance of the Duty enjoined in the Words, *because many false Prophets are gone out into the World*. q. d. You ought to be very careful in trying the Spirits, inasmuch as these last Times are perilous Times, the World is full of Deceivers : take Heed therefore and beware of these false Teachers : remember that it is not all Gold that glitters ; that Satan himself is often transformed into an Angel of Light ; that many pretend to come in God's Name with a *thus saith the Lord* in their Mouths, whom he has not sent, *Jer.* 29. 8, 9. Has not your Master warned you that false Christs and false Prophets shall arise, and shall shew great Signs and Wonders, to deceive (were it possible) the very Elect : You had great Need then to be cautiously upon your Guard.

The Method I design in the prosecuting this Subject shall be to speak somewhat to each of these following Heads.

- I. *First*, I shall briefly shew that there have always been false Prophets or Teachers in the World, who have pretended to Inspiration.
- II. *Secondly*, That God has graciously been pleased to give his Church a certain and invariable Rule, by which they may distinguish between the Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Error.

III,

III. *Thirdly*, That 'tis highly necessary, that Christians make good Use of this Rule, in trying the Spirits and judging for themselves.

IV. *Fourthly*, I shall endeavour to try the Spirits which have been the instrumental Cause of that religious Commotion in various Parts of this Continent and elsewhere, to see if they be of God. --- And *Lastly*, I shall conclude with some brief Application of the Subject.

I. I begin with the first of these Heads in Order, viz. to shew that there have been always false Prophets or Teachers in the World, who have pretended to Inspiration or divine Revelation. --- That this is a Truth any Person who is acquainted with sacred and profane History will readily grant. If we look into *sacred History* during the *Old-Testament* Period we shall find a Multitude of the Devil's Ministers, all pretending to divine Inspiration. I might shew a great many particular Instances. We have God warning his People, *Deut.* 13. 12. of false Teachers who should endeavour cunningly to draw them aside from the Worship of the true God to that of Idols. Thus we read *2 Tim.* 3. 8. that there was a *Jannes* and a *Jambres* in the Court of *Pharaoh* who withstood *Moses*, and who by Sorcery and the Help of the Devil thought to do as great Miracles as *Moses* did by the infinite Power of God. --- And thus *Balaam*, notwithstanding his high Pretences to divine Revelation and also to the most inflexible Integrity; yet was one who dealt with the Devil in hellish Spells and Inchantments, and also a Person of a base, mercenary, covetous Disposition. --- And then if we come down to the Days of *Elisba*, we find the Prophets of *Baall* were very numerous, and also exceeding zealous in their Way, in so much that they leaped upon the Alter and cut themselves with Knives and Lancers till the Blood gushed out. --- And thus we read that there was a *Zedekiah* to oppose *Micaiah* the true Prophet

Prophet of the Lord, and to persuade *Ahab* to go to *Ramoth Gilead* to his own Ruin. --- Thus there were lying Prophets, in the Days of *Jeremiah*, who persuaded *Zedekiah* and his People that *Jerusalem* should not fall into the Hands of the *Chaldeans*; and by this Means led that poor unhappy Prince and his People to their Ruin, by hindring them to make that seasonable Capitulation which might have prevented it.

And then if we turn our Eye from the sacred History of the Old-Testament to the *prophane Histories* that are co-incident with and after that Period, we shall find innumerable Cheats and Impostors of this Sort. He must needs be a Stranger to or at least superficially acquainted with the *Grecians*, the *Romans* and other Pagan Histories, who has not heard of the famous *Sibylline Oracles*, of the Oracle of *Apollo* at *Delphos*, that of *Diana* at *Ephesus*, as likewise that of *Jupiter Hamon* in *Libia*, with many others: the respective Priests of which all pretended to be inspired by their Gods when they gave forth the oracular Answers: --- Who has not heard of the two famous Impostors viz. *Zoroastres* in *Persia* and *Mahomet* in *Arabia*.

And then if we take a View of the *New-Testament* Period, and the Time that has since ensued, we shall find that no sooner did the Light of the Gospel shine out and the glorious Sun of Righteousness irradiate the World with his illuminating and chearing Beams, but the Prince of Darkness endeavoured to obscure it. --- Were there not those even in the Days of the Apostles who err'd in the great Doctrine of Justification, who were for mixing the Deeds of the Law along with Faith, and who taught that we are justified partly by Faith and partly by Works? whose pernicious Tenets the Apostle *Paul* refutes in a solid and elaborate Manner in his Epistles to the *Romans* and *Galatians*. --- Were there not those who quarrel'd with and impugn'd the high and sovereign Doctrine of Predestination, whose Cavils the Apostle answers in

in the ninth Chapter to the *Romans*. Thus the Apostle *Peter* tells us of unlearned and unstable Men who wrested Scriptures to their own Destruction. Do we not read of ungodly Men who turned the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ into Lasciviousness ; who under Pretence of exalting free Grace, unloos'd the Reins on the Neck of their impetuous Lusts saying, *Let us continue in Sin that Grace may abound* ? Were there not an *Himeneus* and *Philetes*, who denied the Resurrection, and overthrew the Faith ? Was there not an *Ebion* who denied the Divinity of Christ, and who taught the Obligation of the ceremonial Law under the Gospel ? A *Cerinthus* who taught that Christ should at his Coming give to his People all carnal or sensual Delights, and who denied the whole Scripture, *Matthew's* Gospel excepted :--- What vile Principles did the *Gnosticks* hold ? What abominable Practices were they guilty of ? and yet what high Pretences to Revelation did they make ?

If we come further down and look into the Legends of the Church of *Rome* ; how many ridiculous Stories, how many counterfeit Miracles, & lying Wonders have we there ? And then if we descend still further down and come to the Time of the *Reformation*, we shall find that no sooner did that blessed Day of Gospel Light break forth upon the World, but the Devil endeavoured to obscure it. How many extravagant Sects, how many heretical Opinions shew'd themselves in the Days of the true Reformers ? the respective Patrons of which all pretended to be zealous Protestants, and to make a loud Cry against the Church of *Rome* ? He who will be at Pains to read the History of the *German* Anabaptists, the gross Errors and ridiculous Extravagancies they run into ; as also that of some of the Sectaries in *South-Britain* in the last Century ; as likewise the Rise and Progress of the subtle Error of *Arminius* ; cannot but grant the Point.

Thus from what has been briefly said upon this Head, it plainly appears that there have been always false Teachers

chers in the World who have pretended to Inspiration, as far as we have any History to inform us. And it is very probable it will be so as long as the Devil has a Kingdom in the World. --- But what I pray do the Adversaries of the present religious Commotion gain by the proving of this Point, except they can likewise prove that the Promoters of the present Work hold the same pernicious Principles, or as bad as those ancient Hereticks did ; or that they are guilty of the same wicked Practices that those were ? Does it indeed follow as a just Consequence that because *Arius*, *Socinus*, *Pelagius*, *Arminius*, &c. were Hereticks and false Teachers ; that therefore Messieurs the *Erskines* in *Scotland* and their Adherents there, Messieurs the *Tennents* in *Pensylvania* and their Adherents there, Dr. *Edwards* and Mr. *Whitefield* in the Church of *England* and their Adherents there, are also Hereticks and false Teachers ; especially considering that they oppose those ancient Hereticks, and in opposition to them do maintain the Doctrines of the 39 Articles of the Church of *England*, and those of the *Westminster* Confession of Faith ? He who can make a just Consequence of this, may reconcile Light and Darkness, and prove that bitter & sweet are the same Things.

II. I proceed to the second Thing, viz. to shew that God has been graciously pleased to give his Church a compleat and invariable Rule, by which they may distinguish between the Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Error. I need not dwell long on this Head. 'Tis only necessary to observe briefly, that the HOLY SCRIPTURES contained in the several Books of the Old and New-Testament is this Rule. I presume you all hold at least by Profession ; that the Scripture is the Word of God, and consequently the great Rule of Faith and Practice. I shall not therefore at present stay upon the Proof of that which is granted upon all Hands. And he who grants this, viz. that the Scripture is the only Rule,

Rule, will be obliged to admit of particular Texts taken out of Scripture to prove that it is a complete Rule. And of these there are Abundance : see Psal. 19. 8. *The Law of the Lord is perfect converting the Soul, &c.* Thus, Mic. 6. 8. *He hath shewed thee, O Man what is good, &c.* To the same Purpose is 2 Tim. 3. 16. *All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God ; and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, and Instruction in Righteousness ; that the Man of God may be perfect, &c.* --- And it is a Mercy for which we cannot be too thankful, that we have this Rule, and are not obliged to receive as Doctrines the Commandments of Men : Who had they the leading of our Judgments and Consciences, would soon (we have Reason to fear) bring us to burlesque all serious Godliness, and to ridicule the Operations of the blessed Spirit under the Notion of Enthusiasm and fanciful Delusions.

When I say the Scripture is a compleat Rule, and that God has thereby put his People into a Capacity to distinguish between the Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Error ; I would by no Means be understood to exclude the Necessity of the Spirit's Teachings. CHRIST, as a Prophet, teaches by *his SPIRIT*, as well as by *his Word* : yea and the Teaching of the SPIRIT is absolutely necessary in Order to the saving and practical Understanding of the *Word*. A Person indeed may possibly attain a sound and right doctrinal Knowledge without the *Spirit*, so as to approve of the Things that are excellent, being instructed out of the Law, *Rom. 2. 18.* and by this Means may be so far Judge of Doctrine, as to try the Spirits aright. But a *saving practical Knowledge* he cannot attain without the Teaching of the *Spirit* ; nor does this any Way derogate from the Compleatness and Perfection of the *Rule* : 'tis not owing to any Defect in the Sun, that a blind Eye cannot see the Light.

III. I pass to the Third Thing in the Method ; viz. to shew that 'tis highly necessary that Christians make good Use of the Rule that God has given them, in trying the Spirits and judging for themselves.

That this is a Truth, is plain from the Words of my Text : *Try the Spirits, &c.* To this purpose we have the Injunction 1 Thess. 5. 21. *Prove all Things, hold fast that which is good.* Thus Phil. 1. 9, 10. The Apostle prays on the Behalf of that Church, that their Love may grow more and more in Knowledge and in all Judgment, that they may approve the Things that are excellent. And thus Heb. 5. 13, 14. The Apostle speaks of grown or experienced Christians, who he says have their Senses exercised to discern both Good and Evil. The Apostle desires the *Corinthians* to be Followers of him no further than he was of CHRIST, 1 Cor. 11. 1. which plainly shews that they had a Right to try him, and his Doctrines, by the Rule. Thus we have the *Bereans* commended, and the Epithet of *Noble* given them, for their assiduous Care in *searching the Scripture to see if the Things spoken even by the Apostles were so.* Acts 17. 11. And it is spoken to the just Praise of the Church of *Ephesus*, Rev. 2. 2. That she had tried those who said they were Apostles, and had found them to be Liars. With which agrees our Lord's Injunction to the Disciples, Joh. 5. 39. *Search the Scriptures.*

In Sum, God has graciously allowed Christians, as a Part of their Christian Liberty, a Judgment of Discretion : And this it is their Duty to hold fast, making good Use of the Powers that God has endowed them withal as reasonable Creatures, in trying the Spirits by the *Rule of God's Word* : bringing all private Spirits and all particular Doctrines to this great infallible Standard, this Platform of Faith and Manners ; as they agree or disagree with it, receiving or rejecting them. Isa. 8. 20. *To the Law and to the Testimony ; if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no Light in them.*

IV. I come now to the fourth and last Thing proposed in the doctrinal Part, which was to *try the Spirits* which have been the instrumental Cause of that religious Commotion in various Parts of this Continent and elsewhere, to see if they be of God.----As this (in the present Conjunction) is the most material Head, I shall endeavour to be somewhat larger upon it : And that I may proceed the more distinctly I shall essay to try (1.) the Spirit of the *Promoters*, (2.) of the *Opposers* of the present Work : and then let every one judge for himself and say, which appears to be most of God. But ere I proceed I would beg Leave to premise a few Things ;

1. I premise that it is very unjust to charge any Party in general with the erroneous Opinions or imprudent Conduct of one or more particular Persons who have declar'd themselves to be of the Party : Especially if said Party be so far from approving of or countenancing said Opinions and Conduct, that they declare against them, and take due Care as far as Circumstances will allow, to deal with the Person or Persons in Order to his or their Reformation. ---As for Example, I appeal to the unprejudiced ; Would it have been just to have charged *Christianity* in general with the Errors of *Ebion* and *Cerinthus*, the *Gnosticks*, or any other of the ancient Hereticks ? To have charged the *Reformation* with the Errors & ridiculous Extravagances of the *German-Anabaptists* ? Or the *Church of England* with those of *Whiston* ? Would it have been just in a common Enemy of Christianity to charge *Paul* with the Dissimulation of *Peter*, when he withstood him to the Face in that wherein he was to be blamed ? And in like Manner would it be just to charge Mr. *Whitefield* with the Errors of Mr. *Wesley* ? Thus in Case any of the profess'd Promoters of the present Work in the Land should run into any Errors, or be guilty of any extravagant Conduct ; would it be just to make this a Matter of Reproach to the whole Work ?

2. I would premise that if a Minister or a private Christian should drop an Expression which not being so well cautioned as it ought to be, is by reason of its Ambiguity capable of being explained in an unsound Sense : that even in this Case it is most unjust and uncharitable to explain it in such a Sense : granting we have sufficient Means of knowing that this Sense is contrary to the Person's settled Opinion.

3. I would premise that granting we know that a Person has readily been in an Error in Judgment for some Time ; yet if we know that he has retracted said Error, 'tis most disingenuous to speak of him as if he still retained it, and to endeavour to make the World believe that it is still his Opinion. As for Instance, would it not have been highly injurious to have charged *Augustine* with any of his former Errors after he had written his Book of Retractions ?

These few Particulars being premised which I think cannot but be granted ; I proceed as I proposed to try the Spirits.

[1.] Of the *Promoters* of this present Work. And in the doing of this I shall essay to try them. (1.) With Respect to their *Doctrine*. (2.) With Respect to their *Manner of Life*. (3.) With Respect to their *Labours*. And (4.) With Respect to the *Effects* their Labours have produced.

1. I shall essay to try them with Respect to their *Doctrine*. This is one excellent Mark by which Christians may distinguish between true and false Teachers : and therefore we have it prescribed as a Rule by which we may discern between the Spirit of CHRIST and the Spirit of *Antichrist*, in the Context. Let a Person be seemingly never so sober & blameless in his Walk, let him make never so high Pretences to Inspiration or divine Revelation ; yet if he bring any Doctrine contrary to Godliness, or which is subversive of the genuine Doctrines of the Gospel, we are not to believe that the Spirit by which he

he is acted is of God. Yea altho' he should shew a Sign or a Wonder, & they should come to pass; yet ought we not to believe him: because thereby the Lord our God doth try us, *Deut. 1. 3. 1, 2, 3.* We are not so much as to receive him into our Houses, neither to bid him *God Speed*: But though he appeared like an Angel, we are to hold him accursed, 2 John 10. ver. Gal. 1. 8. ---- Now the *Doctrines* which the *Promoters* of this Work teach, are the *Doctrines* of the *Gospel*, the *Doctrines* of the *Apostle's Creed*, of the *39 Articles of the Church of England*, and of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. To these they often appeal for the Truth of what they preach. ---- More particularly these Men are careful to teach and inculcate, the great *Doctrine* of *Original Sin*, in Opposition to *Pelagius*, *Arminius*, and their respective Followers. That this Sin has actually descended from *Adam*, the natural and federal Head, to all his Posterity proceeding from him by ordinary Generation; that hereby the Understanding is darkened, the Will depraved, and the Affections under the Influence of a wrong Bias, to that Degree that they are utterly indisposed to any Thing that is spiritually good; that Man, as a sad Consequence of the Fall, has lost all Power in Things spiritual. This *Doctrine* they insist upon, in Order to humble the Pride of Man, to drive him out of himself, and convince him of his own Emptiness?--- They teach likewise with due Care the *Doctrine* of the *Imputation of the Righteousness of the second Adam*, viz. *JESUS CHRIST*, God equal and of the same Substance with the Father, in Order to atone for the Guilt and Cleanse from the Pollution of that Sin descended upon fallen Man from the first *Adam*; that he must be made to Sinners Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption; and that he is the Lord our Righteousness, *Jer. 23. 6.* As also that this Righteousness is apprehended and applied by *Faith* alone, without the Deeds of the Law; that all Works are and consequently all boasting is excluded;

cluded ; that though Works have no Part in our Justification, yet the Faith which justifies the Soul is lively and operative ; that which justifies it self in the Sight of the World by Works, which purifies the Soul from the Pollution of Sin, and influences the Person who has it to bring forth the Fruits of new Obedience. They teach likewise that this *Faith is the Gift of God* ; that a Man cannot believe by any inherent Power of his own ; and that yet notwithstanding Faith being our Act and a commanded Duty, we are to endeavour to believe ; and with a due Sense of our own Insufficiency and a humble Dependence upon GOD for Strength, we are to strive to exert the vital Act.--- As to *Conversion* or *Regeneration*, they hold this to be absolutely necessary ; that the Tree must be made good, before the Fruit be so ; that except a Man undergo a supernatural Change by the Operation of the Holy Ghost upon his Soul, or be born of Water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. And in as much as they find that Man in his natural State is full of Self-Conceit, that in his own Opinion he is rich and increased in Goods and stands in need of Nothing, or as *Job* expresses it, That vain Man would be wise, though he be born like the wild Asses Cold ; they therefore in their Preaching make Use of the *Terrors of the Law* : they use the Law, as God has appointed it to be used, viz. in a Subserviency to the Gospel, or as a Schoolmaster to bring Men to Christ, *Gal. 3. 24.* But to say that the Law is the only Topick on which they constantly insist, endeavouring to work on the lower Passions, and to drive Men with slavish Fear like brute Creatures, is false and slanderous. They preach also the *Consolations of the Gospel*, the intrinsic Beauty of Holiness, and the Reasonableness of Christ's Service.--- As to THE SPIRIT, I never heard that the most considerable Promoters of this Work pretended to the extraordinary Gifts thereof that were peculiar to the apostolick Age, I believe I might venture to challenge their Adversaries

to

to shew that they pretend to the Spirit in any other Sense, than in his convincing, enlightning, directing and comforting Influences. And in these Respects the Spirit is the Priviledge of all true Believers. If any Man have not the Spirit of Christ, thus, he is none of his *Rom. 8. 10.*--- As to *civil Government*, they are exceeding loyal, they put Men in Mind to be subject to Principalities and Powers ; to render to all their Dues, Tribute to whom Tribute is due, Honour to whom Honour, and Fear to whom Fear ; to render to *Cæsar* the Things that are *Cæsar's* ; and to pray for Kings, and all in Authority, that we may live quiet and peaceable Lives in all Godliness and Honesty. With Respect to the *Government* of the *Church*, they hold that CHRIST is the sole Head and King of the Church ; that the Government is upon his Shoulders ; that he is King of Kings and Lord of Lords ; that in Order to the Management of the Affairs of his House, He has set Officers in the same ; that he has vested these, not with a legislative Power, or a Power to make new Laws and impose them upon his free Subjects, but only with an executive Power, or a Power to put in Execution those Laws which he has already made. I might instance a great many other Particulars with Respect to the Soundness of these Mens *Doctrines* ; but the Time would fail me : And therefore let it suffice to say, that their Opposers have not been able hitherto, and I believe cannot yet shew one Particular in which they have departed from the Faith.

I am aware it may be said by some ; but why do these Men insist so much upon *Original Sin*, upon the *New-Birth*, and *Justification by Faith alone* ? Are there not other Doctrines to be preached as well as these ? and is it not the Business of a Gospel-Minister to declare the whole Counsel of God ? To which I answer 1. That I deny that they always insist upon these particular Doctrines. 2. I take these to be some of the Reasons why they insist so much upon them. (1.) Be-
cause

cause these are great important Doctrines. Justification by Faith (as *Luther* has observed) is the Article of a standing or falling Church. And indeed we cannot deny the Observation to be just, if we allow what the Apostle says, viz. that *if Righteousness come by the Law, CHRIST is dead in vain.* (2.) Because 'tis exceeding difficult to bring vain conceited Man to a firm and steadfast Belief of them. (3.) Another Reason why they insist so much upon these Doctrines is because others insist so little upon them : Nay, some do openly deny them ; deny the Necessity of supernatural Grace, hold the Power of Man's Will in Things spiritual, say that we are justified partly by Faith and partly by Obedience, and that CHRIST's Righteousness was only to make up the Defects of our Righteousness. Is it not high Time for all who are faithful to CHRIST's Cause, to appear for and inculcate these Doctrines, when CHRIST is thus wounded in the House of his professed Friends ? When the very Foundations of our Religion are shaken, and the distinguishing Doctrines of Christianity are explain'd away ? For this I may venture to say ; that *Arminianism* tends to *Deism*, and *Deism* superceeds the Christian Scheme : no need of CHRIST to do that which we are supposed to have Power to do our selves : *If Righteousness come by the Law, then CHRIST is dead in vain.*

2. Let us try them with Respect to their *Manner of Life*. And can it be denied that this has been very exemplary and heavenly ? I grant indeed, that this of it self is no Proof of their being sent of God, if their *Doctrines* were false. The Character of *Socinus* was wise, grave, religious, &c. But when Purity of *Doctrine & Life* go together ; both united make a very strong Evidence. Now the most famous and successful of them do evidently appear to have much of their Conversation in Heaven, to have got a great Degree of Knowledge of their own Hearts. What a sweet forgiving Spirit do they shew to their most virulent and bitter Enemies ? What *Lambs* are

are they in their own Cause, and yet what *Lions* in CHRIST's ? We see an Example of this with Respect to Mr. *Wesley* and Mr. *Whitefield* : The latter of these had a most endeared Affection for the former ; and yet he, viz. *Wesley*, no sooner stricken at the great Doctrines of Election and the Saints final Perseverance, but the *other* appears openly against him : Thereby shewing that the Cause of CHRIST was dearer to him than any Friend he had upon Earth, and that he knew no Man after the Flesh, 2 Cor. 5. 16.

3. Let us try them with Respect to their *abundant Labours*. And have not several of them been eminent Followers of CHRIST ? In this Particular how zealous are they about their Master's Business ? How are these Angels or Messengers of God caused to fly swiftly in publishing the everlasting Gospel to them that dwell upon the Earth ? What prodigious Fatigue of Body and Mind do they expose themselves to, out of a tender Love to Souls ? And how wonderfully are they supported in all their Toil ? These Things are so remarkable with Respect to Mr. *Whitefield* in particular, that the great and pious Doctor *Watts* of *London* speaking of him in a Letter to his Correspondent here, expresses himself thus ; ' I must say it seems to me as though some divine Power attended him to support him under such endless Fatigues.' In a Word, I think these Men may very consistent with Modesty and Truth appeal to the Churches where they have been, and say with the Apostle 2 Tim. 3. 10. *But thou hast fully known my Doctrine, Manner of Life, Purpose, Faith, Long-Suffering, Charity, Patience.*

4. Let us next try them with Respect to the *Effects* that *their Labours* have produced, and can any have the Front to deny that these have been good ? Have not covetous Worldlings in a great Measure had their Affections weaned from the Things of the Earth, and set upon those Things that are above : Are there not in-

numerable Instances of Swearers, Drunkards, unclean Persons, Tattlers, Liars, Sabbath-breakers, &c. who have left off their favourite Vices ; have cut off the right Hand, and plucked out the right Eye ? Have not several pharisaical self justifying Person, who thought themselves in a very good State before, had their sandy Foundations discovered ; so that they have been made to alter their Tone, and instead of saying, *God I thank thee that I am not as other Men are*, they have been made to cry, *Lord be merciful to us Sinners ?* Have not many had their secret Sins so particularly touched by the penetrating Sword of God's Spirit, that they have been made to cry out with the Woman of Samaria, *Come see a Man that told me all that ever I did ?* Have not many seen both the Heinousness of Sin, and the Desirableness of CHRIST, with other Eyes than ever they did before ? Have found a Sweetness in the Bible, a Delight in secret Prayer, and Christian Conference, and Meditation, that before they were Strangers to ? Has not Bigotry been very much subdued ? And many of late have so learned CHRIST, as to esteem one another as Christians, and not to place the Kingdom of Heaven in Meats and Drinks ? Yea, has not God in his just Sovereignty been revealing the Mysteries of his Kingdom to Babes, while he has hid them from the wise and prudent ? Have not little Children been heard singing *Hosanna* to the SON of *David* ? God thus perfecting Praises from the Mouth of Babes and Sucklings, and to the stilling of the Enemy and the Avenger. --- O my Brethren, are any of you under the malignant Influence of such a woful Prejudice, as to imagine that *these* and many other such desirable *Effects* are the Works of the Devil ? It is my Hope and shall be my Prayer that God will remove your Prejudices.

And thus I have endeavoured to try the Spirits that promote this Work : Next let us try the Spirits of the *Opposers* of the same. And in doing of this I shall endeavour

deavour to try them. (1.) With Respect to their *Doctrine*, (2.) With Respect to the *Spirit or Temper*, with which they oppose the present Work.

1. Let us try them with Respect to their *Doctrine*. And it will be found upon Examination that some of the most violent Opposers are Men of *Arminian, Pelagian, and Deistical* Principles. This is too evident to be denied : Several of them being such as scoff at the Imputation of Original Sin, who deny the Doctrine of Justification by Faith alone, as likewise the high Doctrine of Predestination : And who do strongly assert Man's natural Powers in Things spiritual. I foresee indeed that it may be said that all who oppose the present Work are not Men of such Principles, granting some be. I answer, I charitably hope they are not : But I should rejoice that they would give less Reason, to suspect them of verging that Way.---Is it not a Truth too plain to be denied, that there has been of late a great Growth of the subtile Error of *Arminius* in the protestant World ? And I wish I could say that our Side of the *Atlantick* were free of it. Why then are they not more careful to preach against it, to tell their People of the Danger of it, to shew them that it is destructive to true Christianity.--- In a Word, when they appear as zealous against it, and make as loud a Cry concerning the Danger of it, as they do against the *New Schemers* as they affect to term them : We shall then have more Room for Charity towards them in this Regard.

After all, I do charitably believe that there are some weaker Brethren, both of Ministers and People, who are led in to oppose this Work, and yet are no Arminians ; but are found in the Doctrines of Predestination, supernatural Grace, and Justification by Faith alone : But in the mean Time, I believe that the *principal* and *most inveterate* Opposers are Men of *Arminian* and *Pelagian* Principles, and that these others are only Deputy or second Hand Opposers. They are like the two Hundred

Men who went up with *Absalem* from *Jerusalem* at the Time of Rebellion : But were not made privy to the Plot ? 'Tis said of them that they went in their *Simplicity* and knew not any Thing. --- As these are honest in the main ; there is the better Ground to hope that God in his own good Time will undeceive them, and let them see their Error. And thus far with Respect to their *Doctrine*.

I come next to try them with Respect to the *Spirit or Temper* with which they oppose the present Work. I shall shew a few of the *Properties* of this *Spirit*, which in an obvious Manner do discover themselves in the Opposers. As

1. *Many of them* seem to be acted by a *lying Spirit*. That same Father of Lies, who was a lying Spirit in the Mouth of *Ahab's* Prophets, is still in Being : And indeed if ever Hell seem'd to be broken loose in horrid Lies and Calumny, now appears to be the Time. I would not say that all who oppose the present Work are wilful Liars because I would be as charitable as possible : but this seems to be the Case ; viz. some hatch the Lies, and others labouring under the malignant Influence of a prejudiced Mind do too easily believe them and report them for Truths. How else I pray comes it to pass that so many horrid Lies are forged ? --- Has not Mr. *Whitefield* been represented as a base, mercenary, covetous Man, one who goes about gathering Money to make an Estate for himself ? --- Have not both he and Messieurs the *Erskine's* in *Scotland* been represented as Persons in Confederacy with the Pope, as employ'd by the Man of Sin to bring over People to the cursed Errors of the Church of *Rome* ? Have not several of their *Doctrines* been grossly misrepresented, as any Person may see who will read with Candour what they have written in their own Defence ? Have not their unguarded Expressions been laid hold of, yea Words put upon the Rack to extort Meanings from them which it is plain the Authors never

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intended ?--- Are there not some who are exceeding industrious in endeavouring to make People believe, that these Men hold it as a Principle, that a few Tears and some Convulsion-like Fits are of themselves sufficient Evidences of a Work of God ?--- That they pretend to the Gifts of discerning Spirits to such a Degree as to know whether a Person be converted or not by looking in his Face, or by a few Words Discourse with him ?--- That all converted Persons behoove to be able to give Account of their Conversion with Respect to its Time, Manner, and other Circumstances ?--- But it would swell to a Volumn to repeat one-half of the Slander that is cast upon them. The same Game is play'd against them, which was by the Church of *Rome* against our *Reformers* from Popery, and by the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* against our blessed LORD and his *Apostles*. --- Now my Brethren, Say I beseech you what Spirit these Lies do proceed from : Whither it is most probable that they come from the God of Truth or the Father of Lies. One would think a good Cause did not need such Props as these to support it.

2. As it is a lying so it is a most *uncharitable Spirit*. The Opposers of the present Work do blame the Promoters of the same for want of Charity ; because these preach (as they say) too much Terror, and make the Gate of Heaven too strait : But what I pray can be more uncharitable than to represent this whole Work in a general undistinguished Manner as the Work of the Devil ? To say it is nothing but Phanaticism and Enthusiasm ? That it is like a Bubble upon the Water which will quickly be gone ? That the Men who promote it are wandering Stars, or blazing Comets, or like raging Waves of the Sea foaming out their own Shame ? Are these the Gentlemen of such extensive Charity ! Is this the Wisdom that cometh from above ; which is pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated ? This that Charity described by the Apostle, 1 *Cor.* 13 ?
Which

Which vaunteth not it self, doth not behave it self unseemly, which thinketh no Evil ? If this be Charity, may God deliver me from the Effects of it ! O my Soul come not thou into their Secret, into their Assembly mine Honour be not thou united. *Gen. 49. 6.*

3. As it is an uncharitable so it is an *envious Spirit*.--- Envy is a most diabolical Passion : This is thought to be one of the prime Causes of the Devil's first Rebellion against his Creator : And it were to be wished that there was not one Fibre of this cursed Root in Ministers. alas, does not the Conduct of some of them give too much Ground to suspect that they envy the Success of the Lord's Work in the Hands of their Brethren : --- That which ought to be Matter of Joy to them, seems to irritate their Spleen, and to fill them with a peevish Discontent. O that such Ministers had more of the Spirit of *Moses* ; who when he was told that *Eldad* and *Medad* prophesied in the Camp and desired to forbid them, says to the Messenger, *Enviest thou for my Sake ? would to God that all the Lord's People were Prophets &c.* --- Or that of *John Baptist* ; who rejoiced at the growing Fame of *JESUS*, saying, *HE must encrease, but I must decrease.* --- Or that of *Paul* ; who rejoiced that *CHRIST* was preached though by some out of Envy and Strife. --- O that Ministers instead of weakening, would endeavour to strengthen each others Hands ; that they would rejoice in each others Usefulness. Is not the Harvest plenty ? Are not the Labourers few ? Is there not Work enough for all in the spacious Vineyard of Christ ? Why need they then stand quarreling with one another ; when there is so much planting, watering, pruning and cultivating to be done ?

4. As it is an envious so it is a *partial Spirit*. The Apostle *James* gives it as one of the Properties of the *Wisdom that cometh from above*, that it is *without Partiality*. --- There is no Perfection in this corrupt sinful State. Many Blemishes are to be seen in the Life of the
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most eminent Saint ; which are the inevitable Consequents of human Frailty and Remains of a Body of Sin and Death. So that if all the Defects of any Author, all the Blemishes of any Person, all the Imprudencies in the Management of any Cause be industriously gathered together and magnified, and in the mean Time no Mention made of that which is commendable in them ; it will make the best Person or Cause in the World look with a dark and gloomy Aspect. As for Instance look into the Life of *David* the Man after God's own Heart : Gather all the Blemishes thereof together, his Lying, his vain Glory, his Cruelty, his Murder, his Adultery ; and in the mean Time, suffer Partiality to draw a Vail over the bright Part of his Character, which shall conceal whatsoever was excellent in him : And this Picture of him so drawn, shall be so far from amiable, that it will look monstrous and deformed.

Now I appeal to Facts, whither this be not the practice of many of the Opposers of the present Work ? They constantly pore upon the dark Side of it : whatever they can hear of that, they imagine will cast a Slur upon it ; they greedily lay hold of, and magnify with all their Art and Eloquence. If a Friend of the Work be imprudent, or unguarded in any Part of his Conduct ; this shall be industriously improv'd, but not a Word said of what is commendable in him. If he drop an Expression that is somewhat ambiguous, they will be sure to interpret it in the worst Sense : Nor do they stop here, but give out that this is the Opinion of the whole Party.---I appeal to the unprejudiced, whither this be candid, impartial Treatment ?

5. Lastly, As it is a partial so it is a *profane mocking Spirit*.---I am grieved at Heart that I have Occasion to mention this : But let any Man peruse the Writings of Commissary *Garden* in *Carolina*, and compare these with some ludicrous sarcastical Language that is vented in other Places, both from Press and Pulpit, and then say

say whether this be a false Charge. --- *Felix* trembled when *Paul* reasoned of Righteousness, of Temperance and Judgment to come. --- Soul Concern had the same Effect upon the *Sailor*, *Acts* 16. *Peter's* Hearers felt the Dint of the Gospel two edged Sword, so as to be pricked at the Heart, *Act.* 2. --- The Father of the Child cried out with Tears, saying, *Lord I believe, help mine Unbelief* : *Mark* 5. 24. --- God speaking of true Penitents, says, He will lead them with Weeping and Supplication, *Jer.* 31. 9. The *Psalmist's* Heart trembled before God, and he was afraid of his righteous Judgments. --- *Heman* while he suffered the Terrors of the Lord, was distracted. *Psal.* 88. 14. God's People are said to be Persons of a pure Lip, *Zeph.* 3. 7. --- And to speak the Language of *Canaan*, *Isai.* 17. 18. --- The *Psalmist* says, *O taste and see that the Lord is good, Psal.* 34. and elsewhere, *come and hear all ye that fear God ; I will tell you what he hath done for my Soul* : --- We read, *Mal.* 3. 16. *That those who feared the Lord spake often one to another* : What did they speak of ? Why they discoursed of God's Mercy, Justice, Holiness, Patience, and Wisdom, evidenced in his Government of the World : They established each other in the Ways of God against the proud and atheistical Disputers of those Days. But now in our Days when God's Word and Spirit produce the same Effects with those mentioned in the above quoted Texts ; these Things are all vilified, and undervalued. Men are made to believe that there is no need of Tears and deep Sorrow for Sin ; the Work of Conversion may be done in a more smooth, rational and easy Way ; that these are no probable Symptoms of a Work of God ; they may be all accounted for from physical and mechanical Principles ; --- Persons must not entertain religious Conversation, use mutual Freedom in talking over their Experiences and communing about the State of their Souls ; this savours too much of hypocritical Ostentation, and is inconsistent with Decency and Politeness. --- By this Means

Means, alas, alas, the bruised Reed is broken and the smoaking Flax quenched ; Men are rocked asleep in the Cradle of carnal Security ; and instead of being put upon Soul Enquiry, they are made to believe that they are well enough already : So that they go smoothly down the Stream to Hell, singing *Agag's Requiem* to themselves, that *surely the Bitterness of Death is already past.* ---- O that God would give such Ministers to see what they are doing ; whose Interest they are serving, while they are filling the Minds of poor People with groundless Prejudices against the Work of God.

And thus I have endeavour'd to bring the Spirits, (1.) of the Promoters, (2.) of the Opposers of the present Work to the Rule or Standard. And having so done, I desire every one to judge for himself, and to say which appears to be most of God, which endures best to be weigh'd in the Balance of the Sanctuary.

I proceed now to the IMPROVEMENT : and tho' the Subject would naturally afford several useful Inferences ; yet in Regard I'm afraid I have already incur'd the Censure of Tedioufness, I shall pass other Uses of the same, and conclude with some Words of Exhortation.---In which I shall apply myself (1.) to all in general ; and (2.) to several Sort of Persons, according to their different Circumstances.

FIRST to all *in general* ; I would say my dear Brethren ; take the wholesome Advice of the Apostle in my Text ; i. e. not to believe every Spirit ; but try the Spirits whether they be of God. Do not implicitly pin your Faith upon any Man's Sleeve : Be Followers of no Man farther then he is of Christ.---To what end has God made you reasonable Creatures, and given you the Bible in your Mother Tongue, but that you should judge for your selves ? Make Use therefore of your Christian Liberty : Bring Persons, their Doctrines, their Spirit, and their Practices, to *the Law* and to

the Testimony : And as they agree or disagree herewith, receive or reject them.---Be exceeding careful that Party Prejudice don't bias your Judgment. This is exceeding dangerous ; especially when it is in Soul Affairs. O then let me plead with you to be faithful to your precious Souls : Lay aside all Prejudice of every Kind, whether religious, national, congregational, domestick, or personal : Hang out the Balance fairly, and let the Word of God be Judge. --- Be importunate with God, that he would give you a right Sight of your selves, that he would shew your Soul's State whatever it be, whether good or bad : You'll never be able to try the Spirits of others so well, until you have tried your own Spirits. Alas, how many are forward in judging others, who know not what Spirit themselves are of ? Pull the *Beam* out of your own Eye, and then you'll see the better to pull the *Mote* out of your Brothers. ----

But

SECONDLY, I would be more *particular* in applying myself to several Sorts of Persons, according to their different Circumstances.

And 1. To you who are *full of strong Prejudices against this Work* ; insomuch that you are inclinable to think that it is all Delusion, and the Work of the Devil. I would ask you ; were not some of you very warm in Favour of it within these twelve Months ? What is the Reason of your sudden Change ? Have you discovered that the Promoters of this Work have vented any false Doctrine, or been guilty of any wicked Practice since that Time ? I would ask you farther ; have you not at some Times a hesitating or doubting in your Minds about this Work ? Granting you be not fully satisfied that it is of God, yet certainly you cannot say you are sure that it is not of God : Don't you feel somewhat within you saying at Times, possibly I am mistaken, perhaps this Work is from Heaven ? ---- Is this the Case with some of you, then I would entreat you not to shew your selves virulent Opposers of it. See that

that you make not Conversion-Work the Subject of your common Drollery and Diversion : Have a Care of talking lightly concerning Tears and Sorrow for Sin. Consider that if the Work be of God, as you do not know but it is ; then by this Sort of Conduct you'l be found fighting against God, and grieving the blessed Spirit. Be not Mockers then, least your Bands be made strong, *Isa.* 28. 22. --- I appeal to your Consciences ; have any of you already been guilty of this Sort of Conduct, yet despair not : There is Hope in Israel concerning you : You will with *Saul* the Persecutor obtain Mercy, because you did it ignorantly and in Unbelief. But if Conscience duly informed tells you that it is God's Work, and yet you do wilfully and maliciously go on to ridicule and oppose it ; assure your selves that this is a doing despite to the Spirit of Grace : This is sinning against the *Holy Ghost* ? 'Tis an audacious shooting of the Arrows of your Scorn directly against the Throne of the great and dreadful God ! O then be exhorted to stop in Time : Tremble to think what you are doing : Beg that God would keep you back from presumptuous Sin. --- Take Care, if you be in Doubt about the Work, to have Conscience duly informed : Try both Sides, and then you'l be the more capable to form an impartial Judgment : Prove all Things, and hold fast that which is good ; *1 Theff.* 5. 21. --- My dear Brethren, what should make any of you to doubt concerning the Work's being of God ? Will you but judge of the *Tree* by it's *Fruit* ? Is it the Work of the Devil to make Men who were at Ease in Zion careful about their Souls ? To set them about secret Prayer, Self-Examination, and Christian Conference ? To wean their Affections from the World, and to set their Desires more upon Heaven ? To give them a Sight of the Vileness of their own Hearts, and thereby to humble their natural Pride ? To make Sin appear exceeding sinful, and Christ exceeding precious in their Eyes ? Is it
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the Devil's Work to make Swearers, Whorers, Drunkards, Liars, Sabbath-breakers, Scoffers at Religion, to leave off their respective Vices ?--- Let me intreat you to weigh these Particulars with that Care which an Affair of the last Consequence deserves. What Interest do you imagine I can propose to myself in using this Freedom with you, but a tender Concern for your Souls ? I am looking for nothing from you, I propose no temporal Gain by you : O then if you do not regard me, regard your own precious Souls.

But then I would next apply my self to you who are professed *Favourites* of the present Work. And of you I imagine there are two Sorts, i. e. *graceless* and *gracious* Persons. A Word to each of You.

(1.) You who have *no saving Experience* of Religion upon your Souls, never yet have seen either your Misery or the Need of the Remedy. Poor Souls ! alas what will it avail you that you are professedly on the Lord's Side and seemingly very warm in the Cause, crying with *Jehu*, *Come see my Zeal for the Lord of Hosts* ? If your Heart be not right with God, your being among good Company will be no more Benefit to you than it was to *Judas*.---What are you trusting to ? Is it your Baptism, your visible Church-Membership, your Speculative or Head-Knowledge, your Soundness and Orthodoxy in Principle ? I tell you though these Things must be, yet of themselves they will never do : You may have all these, and yet if you go no further, you'll certainly be damned. Think not then to say within yourselves we have *Abraham* to our Father : Trust not to lying Words, saying, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord. Or are you trusting to your Convictions ? Is it the Ground of your Confidence that you have shed a few Tears and can remember the Time when you were under some Concern ? Remember that this of it self will not do ; that *Felix* trembled, the Sinners in *Zion* were afraid, *Isa.* 33. 14. That *Esau* shed
Tears,

Tears, and yet was no true Penitent : Your Hearts must be changed, your Affections must be turned into another Channel ? Yea the prevailing Bent and Temper of your Souls must be quite altered : In a Word, you must become *new Creatures*, 2 Cor. 5. 17.

But then *last of all* to you who are not only *warm* in this good Cause, but are so *from a right Principle*. I would say to you my dear Brethren ; that I hope there are none of you in any Measure shaken by the Opposition that God's Work meets with in various Places. Certainly you have no Reason. I can appeal to you, whether those who may be look'd upon as the most considerable Promoters of the present Work have been bringing any new Doctrines to your Ears, with Respect to the Nature of Conversion, or with Respect to the Operations of the blessed Spirit, or with Respect to Assurance of Grace ; or in any one Particular, but what are the Doctrines of your Bibles, of your Confession of Faith, and Catechisms ; the Doctrines which your dear Ancestors died in, and which some of them sealed with their Blood.--- Don't then suffer your selves to be banter'd out of your Senses, by a loud Cry of Error and Heresy breaking in upon the Church ; when you cannot but know that it is a false Alarm.--- And if you would not be soon shaken in Mind ; be always labouring after greater Degrees of Knowledge, to be better rooted in your Principles, to arrive at the Stature of adult Men in Christianity, who have their Senses exercised to know both good and Evil. --- Hold fast the Profession of your Faith without wavering ; that you be not henceforth Children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every Wind of Doctrine. ---- And, my dear Brethren, let me in particular exhort you to keep up *Heart Work*, and to maintain spiritual Communion with God : Watch and pray that ye enter not into Temptation : Remember that though you are not the Devil's Subjects, that yet you are still in his Territories, and therefore liable to his Assaults. ---- Be careful

to exercise the Christian Grace of *Charity* : Don't be guilty of rash judging : Remember that your Lord has said, *Judge not, that ye be not judged.* See that you condemn not all that differ from you in Judgment about the present Work, as carnal, graceless and Enemies to God. Consider that even a good Man may be a while in an Error. This I charitably believe is the Case with some in the Land at this Day.---- See that you Guard against a litigious, wrangling Temper : Don't be forward upon all Occasions to enter into Disputes with the Opposers of the present Work : Such a Humour, if it prevail, will have a mischievous Tendency insensibly to worm out practical Religion. Rather then, choose to convince your Opposers by your Lives : Let your Light shine before Men, that they may see your good Works. If they say you are proud, convince them that tis false, by your Humility : If they say you are uncharitable, convince them by your Charity. If they say you are contentious, shew them that it is not so, by your peaceable Conduct. Shew by these Means that your Religion is more than an empty Name ; having a powerful Influence on your Practice : That the Grace of God which has appeared unto you bringing Salvation, has taught you to deny Ungodliness and all worldly Lusts, and to live soberly righteously and godly in the present World.---If thus my Brethren you conduct your selves, God will say to you as he did to the Church of *Philadelphia*, Revel. 3. 8, 10. *Thou hast a little Strength, and hast kept my Word, and hast not denied my Name : Because thou hast kept the Word of my Patience ; I also will keep thee from the Hour of Temptation which cometh upon all the World, to try them that dwell upon the Earth.*

F I N I S.

